

THE REBEL READING SOCIETY

Author Spotlight



Steve Webb

When did you decide that you wanted to become an author?

I studied design and illustration at University and started writing picture books about the characters I was drawing. The result (eventually!) was my first picture book, Tanka Tanka Skunk.

Did you read lots as a child - if you did, where did you mainly read? If you didn't, what was the reason?

I didn't read much at all when I was younger, I did buy books from the school book club because I liked the covers! I think the only real reason for my lack of interest was I hadn't found the sorts of books I like. The first older book I remember loving was The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. At the time I just didn't know books could be like that. I've been looking for funny and or slightly weird books ever since.



What was your favourite book as a child and why?

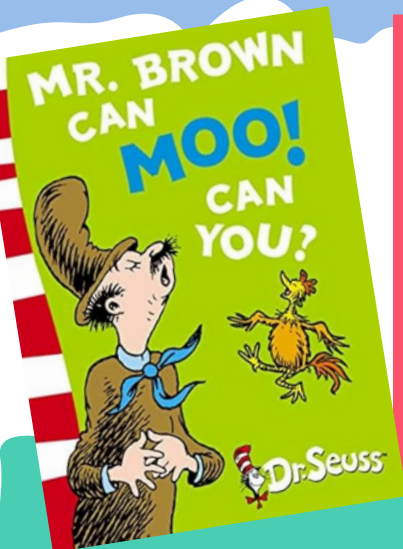
I loved Mr Brown can moo! Can you? by Dr Seuss as a very young child, for its bonkers rhythm and rhyme.

How does it feel to see your books in shops and being sold?

Seeing your own books out in the wild, as I like to call it, is fabulous. It always reminds me that I am a very lucky sausage indeed.

What is the best part about being an author?

I love making things up, the early 'what happens in this story' part of the writing process. There's a bit of a jigsaw element about writing I think, everything has to fit. You can't squish pieces into a story where they don't really belong and you can't have any gaps either. When it all falls into place, that is a very satisfying part of writing too. But then again, I love writing all the bonkers things Peng and Spanners say to each other, especially when Peng's in a mood. This isn't really an answer to your question is it? I love all of it.



What are the 'not so fun bits' in being an author?

The only not fun bit at the moment I would say is drawing speech bubbles! There's a lot of them in a Peng and Spanners graphic novel. It's a bit repetitive, but the shouty ones are fun!

Why do you think it is important for children to read?

I think we are all natural story tellers. We do it all the time in conversation without even thinking about it. And reading and writing is part of that. Reading is particularly great because your own imagination plays a big part. Reading can be fabulously entertaining or informative, so it is really an essential skill. Top tip - It's so easy and tempting to be distracted by your phone these days, I like to put mine way over there where I can't reach it, especially when I'm working. Or I actually put a book on top of it! When you're tempted to have a scroll, pick up a book instead.

Who gives you feedback on your drafts and how do you act on the feedback?

I work with an editor at my publishers. I usually send in a few ideas for the next book, summarised in only one page of A4 paper. This is just the outline of what might happen and new characters that could be involved. Then I'll write a more detail summary of the story, along with the first draft. At each stage my editor will make useful suggestions!

Finally, if you could read for an hour, on your own, anywhere in the world - where would it be?

I do love a beach. Fave beach? Now that's a tricky one. Maybe Polzeath in Cornwall. Can I go now?!



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What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

I have always preferred funny everything. Movies, books, drawings, are so much more interesting or entertaining to me if they have humour. Whether it's clever funny or just plain silly. And chaos can sometimes come with that, fast and funny can be a great combination. I try to get all of that into my writing.

